

Investing in California Small Businesses

SMALL BUSINESS NEWSLETTER • Volume 12: Issue 04

FALL 2024



Small Business Program

The Authority is committed to small businesses playing a major role in building the statewide high-speed rail system.

**SMALL BUSINESS NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 12 • ISSUE 04
FALL 2024**

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RAIL AUTHORITY**

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To access and download more information pertaining to the small business program, visit the Small Business Resources webpage at <https://hsr.ca.gov/small-business/>

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To view past newsletters visit:

<https://hsr.ca.gov/business-opportunities/small-business-program/small-business-newsletter/>

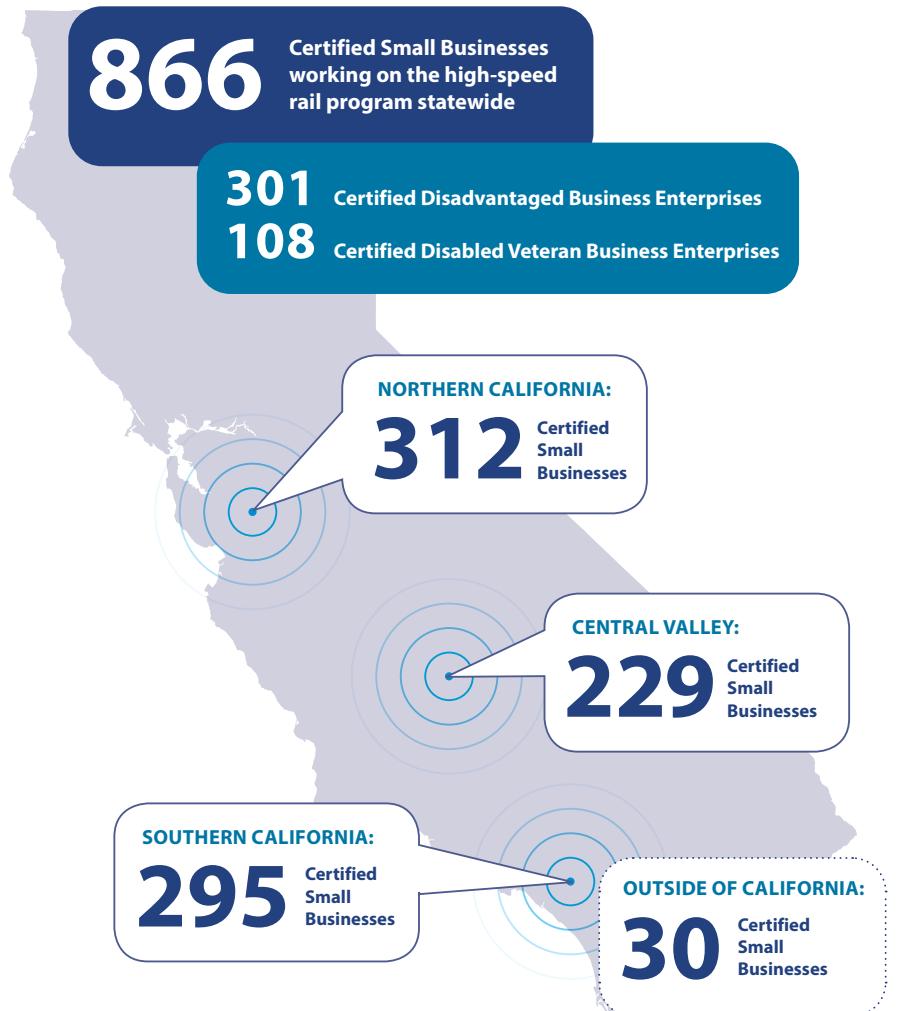
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SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

as of August 31, 2024



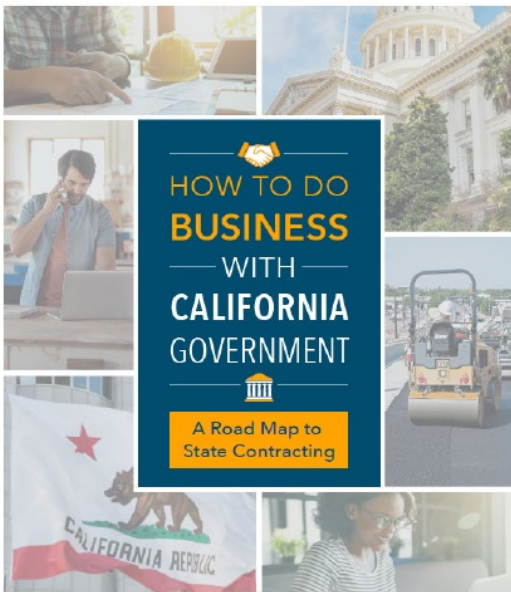
How to Do Business with the State of California

Visit these resources for education, training, and support for growing a thriving business, doing business with the state of California, and connecting with the High-Speed Rail Authority.



Connect with High-Speed Rail

Register your business at www.ConnectHSR.com

HOW TO DO BUSINESS WITH CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT

A Road Map to State Contracting

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES
DGS Office of Small Business and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Services

AMERICA'S SBDC CALIFORNIA

There are 56 Small Business Development Centers in California, working to help small businesses

www.californiasbdc.org

We help entrepreneurs start, grow or successfully exit businesses through mentoring and education.

www.score.org

SCORE

FOR THE LIFE OF YOUR BUSINESS

APEX ACCELERATORS

www.apexaccelerators.us/#/



APEX Accelerators provide education and training to ensure that all businesses become capable of participating in federal, state, and local government contracts.

Chardená Shares

High-Speed Rail is Closing out 2024



Chardená Valley, Small Business Advocate

It's hard to believe this year is almost over. Looking ahead to the next year, we have some exciting events coming up. On January 30 and 31, 2025, industry stakeholders will have the opportunity to meet with Authority Chief Executive Officer Ian Choudri in Sacramento to discuss the next phases of the high-speed rail system. Additional information regarding the Authority's plans for 2025 and beyond were provided in Choudri's program update during the November 7 Board of Directors meeting. This information is now available on the [Board Meeting Schedule and Materials webpage of our website](#).

On the small business front, I'm pleased to share with you that on October 23, 2024, more than 200 attendees representing and supporting small businesses participated in our Annual Small Business Diversity and Resources Fair on the UC Merced campus. This event included networking opportunities with more than 30 prime contractors. There were also two certification workshops hosted by the California Department of General Services (DGS) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as well as a panel discussion on accessing capital and finance, moderated by Khaim Morton, Deputy Treasurer of the California State Treasurer's Office.

As guests of UC Merced, we held our first student panel to ensure that students benefited from our annual event. Panel participants interacted with the students and highlighted various career paths in construction and transportation including our high-speed rail project.

We received great feedback from small businesses, who said they appreciated the opportunity to meet directly with the primes' hiring managers and that they made meaningful business connections.

We will host our 3rd Annual Small Business Diversity and Resources Fair in the Bay Area in the fall of 2025.

I also want to look back on some of our accomplishments in 2024. Here are some of the Small Business Team's accomplishments this year:

- Hosted the Authority's Meet the Prime virtual workshop series, providing small businesses with opportunities to elevate their business and network with primes who have been awarded Authority contracts.
- Partnered with the San Francisco International Airport (SFO) at SFO's first-ever Resource Fair on February 27.
- Hosted the Authority's Small Business Program table at "A Day in Her Shoes" event in Murrieta on March 7 that celebrated women in business.
- Partnered with the Capital Black Chamber of Commerce Pathways to Progress Summit and Vendor Fair in Sacramento on April 25.



Members of the Authority Small Business Compliance Team at the Annual SB Diversity & Resources Fair - appearing from left to right: Ngoc Doan, Wen Chen, Mireya Jiminez, Cyrita Pacheco, and standing, Wen (Grace) Li.



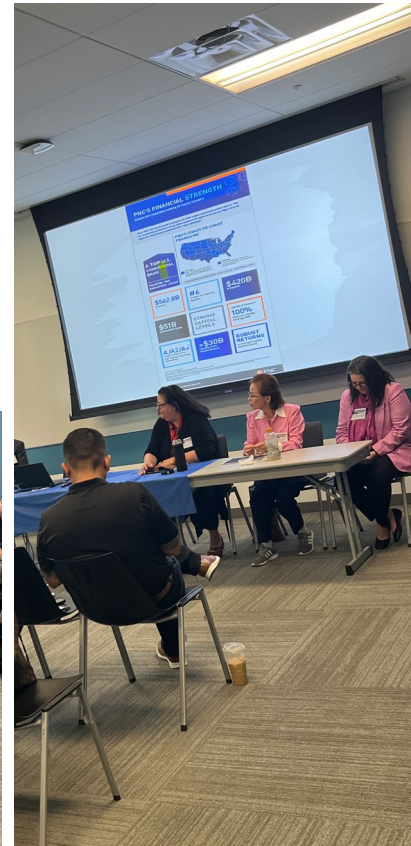
- Hosted the Authority's Small Business Fast Track Networking Fair and Industry Update events on May 7 in collaboration with the Authority's Procurements Contracts team, where small businesses connected with Authority prime contractors and consultants and learned about Authority contracting and procurement opportunities.
- Partnered with Caltrans at the 20th Annual Procurement and Resource Fair on August 14.
- Partnered with SoCal Small Business Construction Expo (SBCX) at the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center on August 23.
- The Authority's Process and Program Development chief, Catrina Blair, served as one of the distinguished guests of the Central Valley Women's Transportation Seminar Marquee Luncheon, High-Speed Rail: The Women Leading the Way on October 16.

In 2025, we will increase our outreach, educational, networking, and matchmaking activities to further

the Authority's small business goals. Our first prime matchmaking event will be held in the spring, so keep an eye out for more information about all of our events. Additionally, as we always like to say, now is the time to make sure you are registered with our [ConnectHSR vendor registry](#) and your business information is current.

I would like to close out this piece by acknowledging that November 11 was Veterans Day, and Native American Heritage Day is November 29. We appreciate the contributions of our Veteran and Native American businesses and associations on this project. Additionally, we would like to thank all businesses, the Business Advisory Council (BAC), government agencies and stakeholders who help us support and build California's first high-speed rail system.

Happy holidays and see you in 2025!



(Top right): A fair attendee talks to representatives from Dragados-Flatiron Joint Venture; (middle): Panelists discuss opportunities to work on the California High-Speed Rail project; (right): Panelists discuss how to get certified with the state to do business with California agencies and departments; (bottom left): Attendees check out various booths at the fair; (bottom middle): Match-making sessions between small businesses and prime contractors help deliver high-speed rail.

Small Business Events



Small Business Outreach Coordinator Damon Dorn during a small business networking event.



Authority staff posing with "I Will Ride" signs at the High-Speed Rail table during the HSR Fast-Track Networking Event 2024.

Board of Director Meetings

December 12

Department of Food and Agriculture Auditorium
1220 N. Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Business Advisory Council Meeting

December 4

1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Online

November 21

Meet the Prime – Paragon Partners Consultants

1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Online

December 10

Caltrans Construction Mentor/Protégé Program

10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Online

Did You Know?

Frequently Asked Questions from Small Businesses

Question: How can my business stay informed and get up-to-date information on the status of the HSR project?

Answer: The Authority's Build HSR website provides up-to-date information on the project. The website provides updates on active construction sites, current road closures and detours in construction zones, and an overview of the small business participation numbers. For more information, visit the Build HSR webpage: <https://www.buildhsr.com/>.

Business Advisory Council Profiles



Rebecca Aguilera-Gardiner, Executive Director and Founder of VIB Network BAC Alternate Representative



Sheri Painter, BAC Primary Representative

Veterans in Business Network (VIB)

The Veterans in Business Network (VIB Network) is one of the newest Authority Business Advisory Council (BAC) members. The VIB Network was formed by Rebecca Aguilera-Gardiner, who also serves as the alternate representative on the BAC and Executive Director and Founder of VIB Network. Sheri Painter serves as the primary representative, and both Painter and Aguilera-Gardiner are owners of Small Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB) and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) certified businesses. The VIB Network works hard to build a veteran business community that will help fellow veteran business owners with resources, training and connecting them with corporations and government agencies. That's why Painter got involved with the VIB Network. When Executive Director and Founder Rebecca Aguilera-Gardiner asked Sheri to get involved as an ambassador for VIB Network, it was an easy yes. "I feel like veteran businesses are often undervalued or underestimated," she said. "Once you're in the military, you're part of camaraderie. When we come together as business owners, there's already that underlying connection that's there. We're all in it together." The VIB Network welcomes all veteran-owned businesses to become part of its network and find out about the many business opportunities that are available to veterans.



Lean, Clean Processes with Russell Burgess



Russell Burgess, Deputy Manager of Process and Program Development in the Authority's Administration department; Owner, REJ Solutions.

Russell Burgess wears a lot of hats. He is the Deputy Manager of Process and Program Development in the Authority's Administration department, the owner of REJ Solutions, and an Air Force veteran. He works with teams, including Small Business, to improve processes and train staff using Lean Six Sigma. "Everything we do, no matter what it is, there is a process. Lean Six Sigma is about removing waste and reducing variation to get a predictable outcome." With over 20 years of experience in the methodology, Burgess has attained a master black belt certification in the Lean Six Sigma belt level system.

As a WSP contractor, he joined the Authority in 2018 and worked in almost every department, including a stint as the CP 4 project director. After the contract ended, he became chief operating officer at Mark Thomas before striking out to start REJ Solutions at the end of 2023 and contracting again with the Authority in April.

What made him decide to start REJ?

"As a retired Air Force person, I noticed it's hard to get good disabled veteran firms on a project like this," Burgess said. "I thought my skill set, leadership experience, and experience on the program and in this industry presented a very good opportunity. I decided to throw caution to the wind and try it."

Though he's a one-man band right now, he gets advice from other small business owners, including his brother. "We don't do anything on our own. I'm very fortunate."

REJ Solutions is a project and program management firm

that uses Lean Six Sigma to deliver projects efficiently and support prime contracts. What makes it stand out is the focus on hiring people with what Burgess calls "high character."

"You can get a hundred resumes of people with the skills. Of those hundred, who are the ones of high character? Who are going to be good team members, not just for our clients but for the organization?"



Russell Burgess attending a California High-Speed Rail Small Business team outreach event.

In addition to consulting, Burgess spent 21 years in the Air Force, including eight as an A-10 aircraft mechanic. In 2002, he retrained in emergency management and spent the next 13 years leading emergency operations centers around the world. He credits the Air Force with helping him hone his leadership skills.

"In the private sector, and oftentimes in government, you get promoted to a leadership role and you get no training," he said. "So, the likelihood of you having a good leader is not very high. In the Air Force, you do the leadership training, then you get promoted."

His service also taught him the value every person brings. "Everybody's important, every job is important. You have to take care of people."

This is part of what he loves about the Lean Six Sigma methodology.

"People know when things aren't efficient. We, as humans, get irritated. Employees, they're the ones doing the work, they know where the problems are. They have ideas about how to fix it. The question is, are we empowering our teams to do that? If something's not working, let's change it!"

—Katta Hules



Off to a Promising Start with SYSTRA | TYPESA

At its June meeting this year, the Authority's Board of Directors awarded the track and overhead contact system (OCS) design contract to a joint venture of French company [SYSTRA](#) and Spanish company [TYPESA](#). The companies have worked together for more than 20 years and have partnered with California rail and transit agencies for more than 35 years.

"SYSTRA and TYPESA bring experiences direct experiences from other projects around the world," according to Bruce Roberts, Authority contract manager for this contract. "They have delivered safe, reliable, high-speed rail effort for passengers throughout Europe, the Asian markets, and the Middle East, just to name a few. I'm just in awe by their passion, their knowledge, experiences, and expertise."

The initial contract, with value up to \$131.2 million, has SYSTRA | TYPESA producing high-level track and OCS designs for the 171 miles connecting Merced to Bakersfield, including detailed designs for the 119-mile section for track construction within the Central Valley. They will also design the OCS system, including the wire support structures, along-track cable containment, across-track ducts, access walkways, fencing, and drainage.

Roberts came to the Authority from Caltrans in March specifically to manage this contract and was part of the evaluation team for the Request for Proposal process. The SYSTRA | TYPESA contract is still in the early stages, but the joint venture already is impressing Roberts with its commitment to the Authority's small business participation

goals. "They took it to heart, and they have a very, very, very comprehensive small business plan in place. So, they might be a firm with international origins, but a high percentage of their work is being done by small businesses that are California-based, which is very exciting." Seventeen out of eighteen subcontractors on the contract are California small or micro businesses.

"They talk the talk and they're walking the walk and that's important," Roberts said. "It's gratifying as a contract manager to work with a company that's doing that."

SYSTRA | TYPESA has also committed to paying its subcontractors promptly and requires that if its subcontractors take on subcontractors, they also pay them within 7 days of being paid by the contractor. The state defines prompt payment as 45 days, which can be a hard timeline for some businesses, Roberts acknowledges. But "SYSTRA | TYPESA made a commitment to pay their small businesses in a very structured manner, which means sometimes they might have to front the money while they're waiting for the state."

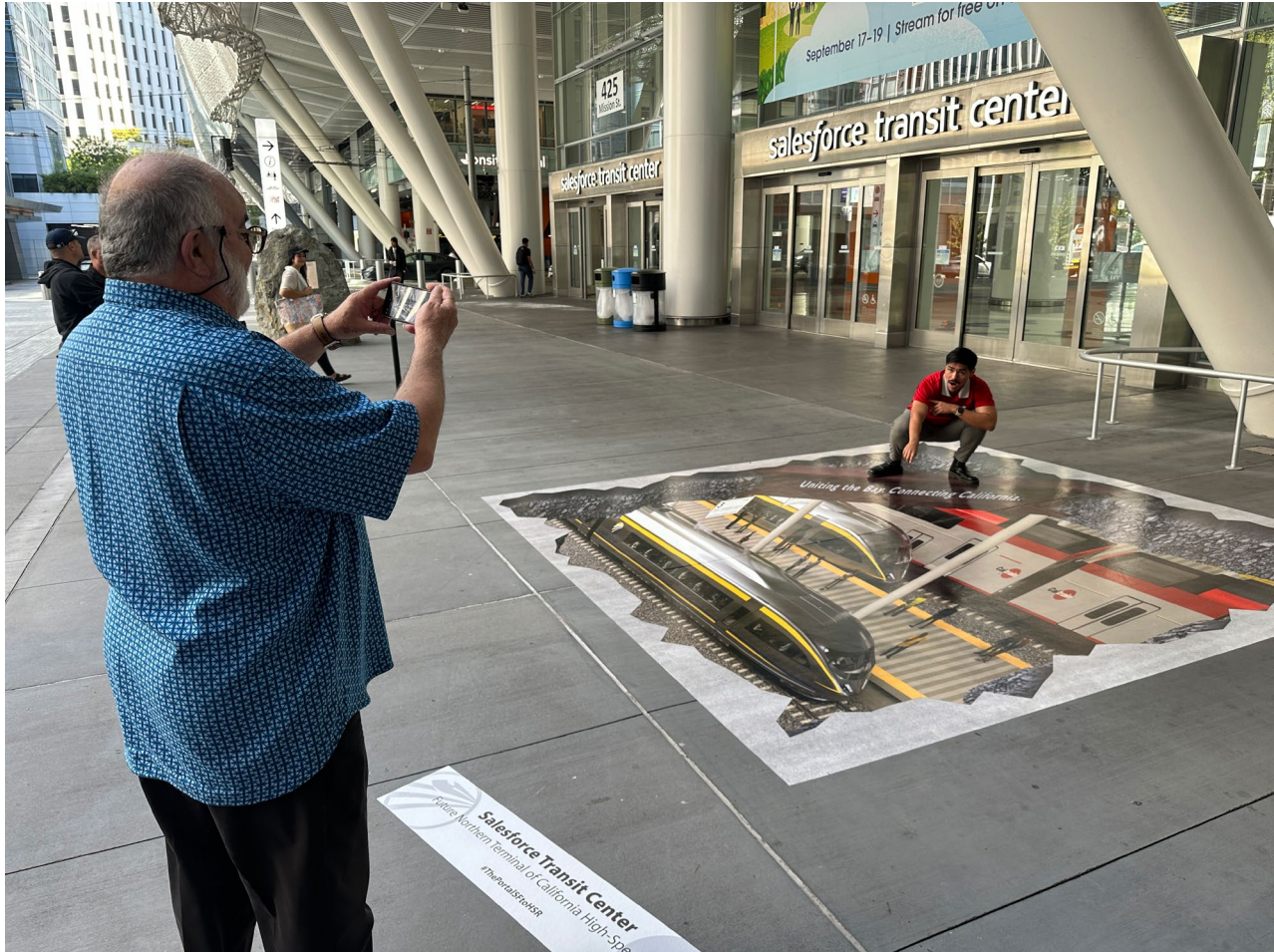
Though still in the early months of a six-year contract, it seems to be off to a good start. Roberts calls SYSTRA | TYPESA "a pleasure to work with" and says he is looking forward to seeing the designs. "This will be a safe and robust system. We're serving the people in this state by providing a world-class system."

—Katta Hules



Printing a Vision Into Reality

Bay Print Solutions Helped the Authority and Its Partner at Transbay Joint Powers Authority Make 3D Art Come to Life



Max Rafie takes a photo of the #ThePortalSFtoHSR 3D public art shortly after its installment.

In celebration of Bay Area Transit Month, the Authority partnered with the Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA) to unveil public art at the Salesforce Transit Center with the help of a small business.

#ThePortalSFtoHSR is an interactive graphic that gives people a 3D preview of the Authority's future northern terminal 60 feet below the transit center, drawing attention to TJPA's The Portal project, which will extend Caltrain and high-speed rail to downtown San Francisco.

"I haven't seen anything like this anywhere in the city," said Max Rafie, head of marketing at [Bay Print Solutions](#). "We

do some nice fun projects, and this one is a little different because of the angle and the perspective."

The certified Small Business Enterprise (SBE) and San Francisco Certified Local Business Enterprise (LBE) contracted with TJPA and helped both transit agencies to bring the design to life. Founded in 2017, Bay Print Solutions serves the Bay Area and specializes in signage, construction document printing, scanning, mounting, and laminating.

The Authority and TJPA leaned on Rafie's expertise to determine what type of material would be best used for the outdoor public art to preserve its integrity. One of Bay



Max Rafie during the installation of the #ThePortalSFtoHSR 3D public art.

Printing Solutions' motto is "think globally, print locally." Rafie said their services in the Bay Area help agencies like the Authority save time and money while reducing carbon footprints thanks to little or no transportation.

Since the unveiling of #ThePortalSFtoHSR, publications and content creators have highlighted the project, including [Newsweek](#) and @TrainGirlSummer on TikTok.

"We are proud of working as a certified SBE and LBE to help transit projects such as The Portal and high-speed rail. It shows that the size of the firm is not as important as their capabilities," Rafie said.

—Van Tieu



Morgan Galli, Northern California Deputy Regional Director for the Authority, poses with family for the #ThePortalSFtoHSR 3D public art.

Veteran Takes a Birds Eye View



Sheri Painter and Scott Painter, Founders, Birds Eye Aerial Drones, LLC.

Sheri Painter and her husband, Navy veteran Scott Painter, started their drone photography business about 10 years ago.

In the early days of drone work, that meant clearing out a spare bedroom of their San Diego home. [Birds Eye Aerial Drones](#) (Birds Eye) was a two-person operation, with Scott flying the drone and Sheri handling the camera work on every flight.

Technology evolved, and so did Birds Eye, eventually employing about 150 people in Southern California from across the United States. Not every Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business is so fortunate. The Painters' work with Birds Eye came naturally. After he retired from service, Scott worked as a drone contractor for the military in Afghanistan. And Sheri has lived around the industry her whole life. "My dad was a FedEx pilot," she said. "He studied for training sessions with posters around the house that looked like the cockpit of his planes. There were flashcards and he had to call

out steps in order and show where the switches and buttons are. I remember that. And Scott and I have been married a very long time, so it's just part of my life."

While Birds Eye hasn't worked on the high-speed rail project yet, the company features prominently in Southern California infrastructure work and Sheri also serves as the VIB Network representative on the Authority's Business Advisory Council.

The Painters are working on a pilot program (no pun intended) with LA Metro, flying over all 367 miles of their right of way to capture images. Those pictures and data will be pulled onto Metro's GIS map.

With dozens of employees and teams of workers in the field, Birds Eye has come a long way from the early days when the Painters used to have to build their own drones.

"Birds Eye also has a robust Flight Operations Department to help keep all our pilots flying safely and legally," said Sheri.



Flight crew from Birds Eye Aerial Drones watching a drone take off.

Times change, and the Painters have changed to meet business needs. It can be complicated sometimes, and that's why VIB's work is important. In the military, personnel are used to following orders and being responsible for a single area of expertise. In business, veterans need to handle everything from marketing to human resources to the actual work at hand. The Painters and VIB have a new mission: helping veterans get their own business off the ground to win contracts.

"I enjoy seeing other veteran businesses doing the same," Sheri said. "I love that VIB brings corporate and government partners that want to work with you. It's a matter of having a solid support system like VIB, building both a solid business and the relationships."

—Jim Patrick



A member of the Birds Eye Aerial Drones flight crew piloting a drone.



Speed Reads



2040 PLAN FOR AFRICA'S ONLY HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE

Morocco's King Mohammed VI has been pushing for the development of rail in the North African nation since 2015. The rail would link between Tangier in Morocco's North and Lagouira to connect Morocco with the rest of Africa. The next step is to expand the line north of Casablanca to Kenitra, and southward to Marrakesh by 2030. The high-speed rail line is expected to foster new business opportunities and facilitate the movement of goods, positioning Morocco as a logistics hub between Europe and Africa. Photo credit: ONFC



HIGH-SPEED RAIL UNDERWAY AT WORLD'S BIGGEST CONSTRUCTION SITE

Saudi Arabia's high-speed rail designed to support the world's largest construction endeavor has reached a new milestone. A transport tunnel, The Spine was created to provide transportation for the public to The Line megacity and has been completed ahead of schedule. The Spine connects commuters via high-speed rail across The Line in 20 minutes spanning a 106-mile structure. The Line megaproject has an ambitious completion date of 2030 and aims to be home to 9 million people and employ more than 140,000 people for construction, with 300,000 jobs estimated to be created. Photo credit: Getty Images



HOW JAPAN'S SHINKANSEN BULLET TRAINS CHANGED THE WORLD OF RAIL TRAVEL FOREVER

Sixty years ago, Japan's sleek blue-and-white train carried passengers from urban Tokyo toward the city of Osaka. The bullet train became a symbol of astonishing technology that impressed people who gathered for the Olympic games in Tokyo. After six decades, Japan continues to lead the rail industry with the Shinkansen network defining speed, travel efficiency, and modernity. The railway is a transportation hero allowing people to travel hundreds of miles through the diverse geography of mountains and sea tunnels. At speeds of 200 mph, the train has a reputation for safety; no passenger has ever been injured or killed due to a derailment. Photo credit: Richard A. Brooks/AFP/AFP via Getty



TEXAS TO MEXICO HIGH-SPEED RAIL PLAN MOVES FORWARD

The plan for a high-speed rail connecting Texas and Mexico took a step forward as officials from Texas and Mexico gathered to discuss the possibility of linking the cities of San Antonio, Austin, and Monterrey. The goal of the project is to provide relief on the heavily congested I-35 corridor. The governor of the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon has expressed interest in building a high-speed rail between San Antonio and Monterrey. A major hurdle is Union Pacific's reluctance to share tracks with passenger rail without a separate freight bypass. Photo credit: David Boe/Associated Press



FLORAL AVENUE AND MOUNTAIN VIEW GRADE SEPARATION

LATEST VIDEOS: WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/CAHIGHSPEEDRAIL



The Floral Avenue Grade Separation, located between Cedar and Chestnut avenues in Fresno County, was completed in June.



This grade separation is approximately 381 feet long and 40 feet wide. It takes traffic over the existing rail and future high-speed rail lines.



The Mountain View Grade Separation was also completed in June and is located between Cedar and Peach avenues in Fresno County.



The structure is 368 feet long and 40 feet wide and takes traffic over the BNSF railroad and future high-speed rail tracks.